

THE GIRL AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE

A STORY OF THE PLAINS BY E. HOUGH, AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF THE COWBOY

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Way of a Maid.

The Halfway House was an oasis in the desert. To-day it was an oasis and a battle ground.

"Come," said the latter, "and I'll show you around over my improvements while we are waiting for a bite to eat."

"The 'bite to eat' was in time duly announced by a loud, sonorous note that arose swelling upon the air.

The long table was spread in the large room of general assembly, this room being, as has been mentioned, excavated from the earth, so that, as they sat at table, their heads were perhaps nearly level with the surface of the ground.



As though this were Tidewater again.

boards, and along it stood long benches instead of chairs.

"You will oblige me, captain," said Buford as they rose from the table, "if you will be so good as to drive Miss Beauchamp over to the claim shanty after a while."

Franklin assented to this proposition with such eagerness that he blushed as he saw how evident had been his pleasure at this opportunity for a moment's speech alone with the girl who sat so near but yet so unapproachable.

Mary Ellen said nothing. The pink spot in her cheek was plainly deeper. It did not lessen as she stood watching the struggle of the two men had in again hitching to the buggy the wild black horse.

"Are you afraid to ride behind that horse?" asked he.

"I don't think so," she replied simply, and her uncle helped her in, while Franklin staided the team. Yet how Franklin hated the wild black horse now!

In order to make the needed repairs to the roof, it was necessary to lay up again a part of the broken wall, then to hoist the fallen rafters into place prior to covering the whole

again with a deep layer of earth. Franklin, standing upon a chair, put his shoulders under the sagging beams and lifted them and their load of disarranged earth up to the proper level on the top of the wall, while Buford built under them with sods.

As Mary Ellen stepped into the buggy for the return home her face had lost its pink. One of the mysterious revulsions of femininity had set in. Suddenly, it seemed to her, she had caught herself upon the brink of disaster.

It was Mary Ellen's wish to be driven quickly to the house, but she reckoned without the man. With a sudden crunching of the wheels the buggy turned and spun swiftly on, headed directly away from home.

"I can't help it," said Franklin. "You are my prisoner. I am going to take you—to the end of the world."

"You've pluck," said Franklin. Then, scorning to urge anything further of his suit at this time of her disadvantage, though feeling a strange new sense of nearness to her, now that they had seen this distress in common, he drove home rapidly as he might through the gathering dusk, anxious now only for her comfort.

In her own little room Mary Ellen sat, her face where it might have been seen in profile had there been a light or had the distant driver looked round to see.

"I know," said Franklin gently. "I would rely on your word forever. I would risk my life and my honor in your hands. I would believe in you all my life. Can't you do as much for me? There is no stain on my name. I will love you till the end of the world. Child—you don't know—"

"Ah, you have your answer! Now, listen to me, Mr. Franklin. I shall keep my promise as a Beauchamp should—as a Beauchamp shall. I have told you long ago what that promise was. I promised to love, to marry him—Mr. Henry Fairfax—years ago. I promised never to love any one else so long as I lived. He—he's keeping his promise now—back there—in old Virginia, now. How would I be keeping mine—how am I keeping mine, now, even listening to you so long? Take me back; take me home. I'm going to go—to go to keep my promise, sir! I'm going to keep it!"

Franklin sat cold and dumb at this, all the world seeming to him to have gone quite blank. He could not at first grasp this sentence in its full effect, it meant so much to him. Yet, after his fashion, he fought mute, struggling for some time before he dared trust his voice or his emotions.

"Very well," he said. "I'll not crawl—not for any woman on earth! It's over. I'm sorry. Dear little woman, I wanted to be your friend. I wanted to take care of you. I wanted to love you and to see if I couldn't make a future for us both."

"My future is done. Leave me. Find some one else to love."

It seemed to him he heard a breath, a whisper, a soft word that said "good-bye." It had a tenderness that set a lump in his throat, but it was followed almost at once with a calmer commonplace. "We must go back," said Mary Ellen. "It is growing dark."

Franklin wheeled the team sharply about toward the house, which was indeed becoming indistinct in the falling twilight. As the vehicle turned about, the crunching of the wheels started a great gray prairie owl, which rose almost beneath the horses' noses and flapped slowly off. The apparition set the wild black horse into a sudden simulation of terror, as though he had never before seen an owl upon the prairies.

"It wasn't ignoble," said the girl, and again he felt her hand upon his arm. "It was grand. You went straight, and you brought us through. I'm not hurt. I was frightened, but I am not hurt."

"You're pluck," said Franklin. Then, scorning to urge anything further of his suit at this time of her disadvantage, though feeling a strange new sense of nearness to her, now that they had seen this distress in common, he drove home rapidly as he might through the gathering dusk, anxious now only for her comfort.

"But you must come in," she said. "No, I must go. Make my excuses," he said. "Good-bye!" The horses sprang sharply forward. He was gone.

Former Governor Black Did It Try to Sell Sewing Machines.

Wins W. C. T. U. Prize.

Wrong Use of Union Cards.

Miner is Injured.

Distilled Spirits.

ILLINOIS NEWS

INTELLIGENCE OF THE DONKEY

Two of the Brutes Save Life of Horse by Their Sagacity.

"You may talk about the intelligence of horses and dogs as much as you like, and I will agree with you every time, but I take my hat off to a pair of donkeys which I own," said C. F. Lathe of Lathes Island.

Hunter is Accidentally Killed.

Police Matron Gets Ducking.

Cancel City Warrants.

Pays Sweetheart's Fine.

School Board is Economical.

Wins W. C. T. U. Prize.

Knights to Enter Drill.

Wrong Use of Union Cards.

Miner is Injured.

Dies in South Africa.

Lightning Strikes Twice.

FEAR THAT WATERS WILL RISE

Residents of St. Clair County Are Alarmed About Garden Crops.

The residents of the western portion of St. Clair county from the bluffs to the Mississippi river are greatly alarmed for fear the lakes in that section will overflow and destroy the early garden crops in Cahokia commons.

TEACHERS' PRESIDENT.

J. K. Stableton, who was the choice of the Central Illinois Teachers' association for president at the Danville convention, is one of the most progressive educators in the state and is a leading member of the Illinois Schoolmasters' club.



J. K. STABLETON

Three years superintendent of the schools of Bloomington and has been given a handsome increase in salary each year.

Teachers' Strike is Settled.

Letter in Trouble With Miners.

Barbers Will Not Raise Prices.

Did Not Kill Wife.

Death Rate is Increasing.

Advance in Wages.

Hand in Feed Cutter.

Lightning Strikes Twice.

Lightning struck a tree on the place of Herman Stritz at North Alton.

Lightning struck a tree on the place of Herman Stritz at North Alton.

Lightning struck a tree on the place of Herman Stritz at North Alton.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

Car Cleaner Gets \$50 for Restoring Pocketbook With \$11.

William Clark, a cleaner, of one of the East St. Louis street railway companies, was liberally rewarded for his honesty.

STATE SUNDAY SCHOOL MEET

One Thousand Delegates Are Expected to Assemble at Mattoon.

The state Sunday School convention will be held in Mattoon May 14, 15 and 16.

Four Generations Dine.

Four generations dined at the home of James Goff, supervisor of the poor of East St. Louis.

Holder Marriage Record.

Within the last six months there have been a dozen marriages in and around the village of Bethalto.

Increase of Crime.

According to the report presented to the board of supervisors in Belleville by the special committee on the investigation of the accounts and records of county offices, the number of prisoners received at the county jail for the past five years is as follows:

Gets Judgment for \$1,300.

Miss Julia Tarbell was awarded a judgment for \$1,300 by a jury in the circuit court in Belleville against J. T. Donovan of East St. Louis.

In Jail for Killing Man.

Walter Power of Farrington township is now lodged in the county jail on account of killing Cleveland Adams.

Did Not Kill Wife.

In the circuit court at Waterloo Anton Stoeckel, charged with killing his wife, was acquitted.

Death Rate is Increasing.

The death rate is rapidly increasing at Springfield. There were 111 death certificates issued during March this year, against 44 for the corresponding month of 1903.

Advance in Wages.

Carpenters of Alton have been given an advance to 40 cents an hour and the bricklayers have been granted an increase to 65 cents an hour.

Hand in Feed Cutter.

Willie, the young son of Wm. Ahamer of Belleville, while playing with a feed cutter, in company with several companions, got his hand drawn into the machine, resulting in lacerating it severely.

Carpenters Strike at Harrisburg.

The carpenters of Harrisburg, numbering about forty, went on a strike because of a refusal of their employers to raise their wages.